

And the Democrats are uniting around yet another multitrillion-dollar taxing-and-spending spree? I guess our colleagues think they can inflate their way out of inflation. That is going to be an extraordinarily painful experiment for the middle-class families of our country.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR AMERICANS ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 1301, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 1301, a bill to provide for the publication by the Secretary of Health and Human Services of physical activity recommendations for Americans.

Pending:

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill.

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill, with Schumer amendment No. 3835, to change the enactment date.

Schumer amendment No. 3836 (to amendment No. 3835), of a perfecting nature.

Schumer motion to refer the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, Schumer amendment No. 3837, to change the enactment date.

Schumer amendment No. 3838 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 3837), of a perfecting nature.

Schumer amendment No. 3839 (to amendment No. 3838), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask consent to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened closely to the speech by the Republican Senate leader, and I have heard statements made over the weekend on television. I think this is a moment where we might consider for just a minute or two a lesson on Senate 101 so there is an understanding of where we are and why we are at this place.

There are 100 Members of the Senate. Currently, there are 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans. Under the ordinary course of business, which has become extraordinary in this Chamber, a majority rules, so 51 votes will pass an amendment or a bill in most cases.

However, there is a creature in the Senate known as a filibuster, and the filibuster requires that 60 votes be found in order to prevail on a motion or a measure.

The filibuster raises the requirement from a simple majority to 60 votes. The Senator from Kentucky knows that as well as I do, he has been here longer than I have, that filibuster makes all the difference in the world. So to argue “The Democrats have the majority; why don’t they just take this majority and do their business?” is to ignore the obvious.

What the Republicans have decided to do is, for the first time perhaps ever—I don’t want to say that without checking the record for sure—but certainly in modern history, to require that when we pass the debt ceiling, we need to have 60 votes on the floor of the Senate. Well, it is no great revelation that with 50 Democrats, we would need 10 Republicans, and the Senate Republican leader has made it clear: He ain’t giving us a vote, not one. So we have come to a standstill.

We are 2 weeks away from a default. For the first time in the history of the United States that we would default on our debt, it is as if America had a big home and a big mortgage and decided one month not to pay on the mortgage. Well, let’s hope the day would come when the payment would be made, but in the meantime, there is a serious question then raised about the credit reputation of the United States, and that is exactly the fire that the Republicans are playing with by imposing a filibuster on this simple measure. They know that they can stop us as long as 60 votes are needed and they give none.

One of our colleagues, Senator WHITEHOUSE, made an interesting observation in our caucus lunch last week. I hope he will forgive me if I try to paraphrase it. He said: Many people argue that we need a filibuster because it really encourages bipartisanship. We have to come together. We have to look for compromise.

Well, how do you compromise when the debt ceiling question is whether you do it or don’t do it? And that is what is at stake here. Are we going to acknowledge the debt of the United States to its creditors far and wide and continue the business of this economy and this government? Republicans say: No, we would rather play fire with it. But they leave out that one element that is so critical: It is their decision, their filibuster that stops this.

I believe that Senator SCHUMER and the Democrats will offer them this opportunity again this week. Senator SCHUMER said as much. But it really troubles me that we are at a point in our history, recovering from this pandemic, businesses getting back on their feet, employees need to go back to work—and the Republicans have taken this strategy of defaulting on the national debt.

As far as the characterization of what reconciliation will do, Senator

MCCONNELL continues to come to the floor repeatedly and say: “It will hurt families.” Well, one of the provisions in the reconciliation bill, which I hope survives our compromise negotiation, will help families find affordable, quality daycare.

When you look at the fact that the vast majority of those who are not returning to work are women, you understand the circumstances. Many of them question whether or not school is going to be in person or by Zoom. They question whether or not they can find affordable daycare in any direction, and they question whether they can afford it once they find it.

If we took that worry off the family plate and said “We are going to make sure that you have accessible, affordable childcare for your children,” think of the relief it would give and the fact that many would return to the workplace.

According to the Senator from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL, that hurts families. Hurts them? It helps them in ways that many of us don’t even understand. Can you imagine frantically leaving a child at home in the care of someone you don’t quite trust because you have no alternative but to go to work and try to earn a paycheck to feed that child and pay the rent? I wouldn’t want to be in that desperate situation. I wouldn’t want anyone in family to face it. To say that hurts families, to do that, is certainly wrong. It would help them if reconciliation includes that measure.

We also have a pre-K program to give kids who struggle a helping hand and a fresh start. We know the Head Start Program—it was created I guess almost 60-plus years ago—has had positive results in preparing people to go to college. Yes, Head Start Programs when they are young children—3, 4, and 5 years old—can make difference in their lives, how they learn, and what they do. So we want to make that the official policy of this country, that we have 2 years of pre-K education available to families. I think they will thank us for it, and in the future, generations that are helped with this will thank us as well.

The notion of extending the school year from K-12 through K-14, to put 2 years of community college without cost for families, is an extraordinary commitment.

There was a time in the turn of the 19th to the 20th century when America decided to make a big, bold experiment. It was called high schools. Up until that point, most families were lucky to get kids through eighth grade. The rich families, the ones well-positioned, would take them to high school. Well, we decided to make high school a universal, national experience in America. So you wouldn’t quit at the 8th grade; you would finish in the 12th grade. Did it result in anything good for us? Take a look at the 20th century. With an educated, motivated workforce, America led the world. It is